

Notice of Allowability

Application No.

10/055,576

Applicant(s)

SATO ET AL.

Examiner

John D. Lee

Art Unit

2874

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address--

All claims being allowable, PROSECUTION ON THE MERITS IS (OR REMAINS) CLOSED in this application. If not included herewith (or previously mailed), a Notice of Allowance (PTOL-85) or other appropriate communication will be mailed in due course. **THIS NOTICE OF ALLOWABILITY IS NOT A GRANT OF PATENT RIGHTS.** This application is subject to withdrawal from issue at the initiative of the Office or upon petition by the applicant. See 37 CFR 1.313 and MPEP 1308.

1. ☒ This communication is responsive to the amendment filed on October 3, 2003.
2. ☒ The allowed claim(s) is/are 1-10.
3. ☒ The drawings filed on 23 January 2002 are accepted by the Examiner.
4. ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some* c) ☐ None of the:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * Certified copies not received: _____.

5. ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).

(a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.

6. ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Applicant has THREE MONTHS FROM THE "MAILING DATE" of this communication to file a reply complying with the requirements noted below. Failure to timely comply will result in ABANDONMENT of this application. **THIS THREE-MONTH PERIOD IS NOT EXTENDABLE.**

7. ☐ A SUBSTITUTE OATH OR DECLARATION must be submitted. Note the attached EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT or NOTICE OF INFORMAL PATENT APPLICATION (PTO-152) which gives reason(s) why the oath or declaration is deficient.

8. ☐ CORRECTED DRAWINGS must be submitted.

(a) ☐ including changes required by the Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) attached

1) ☐ hereto or 2) ☐ to Paper No. _____.

(b) ☐ including changes required by the proposed drawing correction filed _____, which has been approved by the Examiner.

(c) ☐ including changes required by the attached Examiner's Amendment / Comment or in the Office action of Paper No. _____.

Identifying indicia such as the application number (see 37 CFR 1.84(c)) should be written on the drawings in the front (not the back) of each sheet.

9. ☐ DEPOSIT OF and/or INFORMATION about the deposit of BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL must be submitted. Note the attached Examiner's comment regarding REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEPOSIT OF BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL.

Attachment(s)

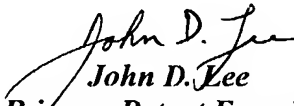
- 1 ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 3 ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 5 ☐ Information Disclosure Statements (PTO-1449), Paper No. _____.
- 7 ☐ Examiner's Comment Regarding Requirement for Deposit of Biological Material
- 2 ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 4 ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413), Paper No. _____.
- 6 ☐ Examiner's Amendment/Comment
- 8 ☒ Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance
- 9 ☐ Other

EXAMINER'S STATEMENT OF REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE

The following is an Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance: After an updated search, U.S. Patent 5,956,449 to Otani et al remains the closest prior art document of record. Applicant has amended claims 1-9 of the present application to require that, among the plurality of modules of the shelf unit, each of the guide rails of each of the modules is engageable with a guide rail of a neighboring module, and that, when each module is inserted into the shelf, a guide rail of the inserted module is guided by a guide rail of a neighboring module, and further that, when the plurality of modules are fully inserted into the shelf, the modules are connected to neighboring modules with a guide rail of each module being engaged with a guide rail of a neighboring module. After careful study of the Otani et al reference, the Examiner agrees that the reference does not disclose or suggest these claim limitations, since the hinge connection structure of Otani et al does not provide any guiding function and is completely different than the guide rail structure of the claimed invention. Claim 10 has been amended in a similar fashion, reciting the structure in terms of upper and lower guide rails. For the same reasons stated with respect to claims 1-9, the Examiner agrees that the reference does not disclose or suggest these claim limitations. Claims 1-10 herein are therefore allowed.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Any inquiry concerning the merits of this communication should be directed to Examiner John D. Lee at telephone number (703) 308-4886. The Examiner's normal work schedule is Tuesday through Friday, 6:30 AM to 5:00 PM. Any inquiry of a general or clerical nature (i.e. a request for a missing form or paper, etc.) should be directed to the Technology Center 2800 receptionist at telephone number (703) 308-0956, to the technical support staff supervisor (Team 2) at telephone number (703) 308-3072, or to the Technology Center 2800 Customer Service Office at telephone number (703) 306-3329.


John D. Lee
Primary Patent Examiner
Group Art Unit 2874